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UNCLAS THE HAGUE 001690

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: DUTCH PARLIAMENT ENDORSES GOVERNMENT'S PRT DECISION

REF: The Hague 1240

11. (U) On July 5 the Dutch Parliament broadly endorsed a recent Cabinet decision to lead a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Baghlan, Afghanistan. Only the small far-left Socialist Party opposed the mission. The operation, announced in a June 28 government letter to parliament, will consist of approximately 150 troops to be deployed initially for one year beginning on September 1. The PRT will be made up of three Military Observation and Liaison Teams (MOLT), an operations center, a separate protection unit that can act as a rapid reaction force and logistic elements including medical support.

12. (U) Some parties in parliament only reluctantly supported the deployment citing concerns over Dutch troops' safety and questions as to the mission's purpose. Defense Minister Kamp claimed he had engaged in "tough" negotiations to secure Baghlan for the Dutch because "it is relatively quiet there." Despite parliamentary skepticism on this point, the fact that the PRT will be part of a NATO operation persuaded the majority. The government also gave assurances that in extremis Dutch troops could seek assistance from the U.S., Britain and Germany.

13. (U) MPs pressed Kamp to define the purpose of the Baghlan mission. Kamp conceded Dutch troops would not be responsible for guaranteeing security in the province, stating that was the job of local authorities. He also said Dutch troops are not to engage in counter-narcotics operations as that would cause too much friction with local warlords. In general, he suggested the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan has been conducive to stability, reconstruction efforts, and refugee returns. Kamp specified that Dutch troops are to mediate in conflicts, cooperate with local police, assist relief organizations, help prepare for elections, and collect information for both NATO forces and the government in Kabul.

14. (SBU) Comment: This debate featured the standard parliamentary concerns on all Dutch post-Srebrenica military deployments, i.e., how dangerous will it be for Dutch forces and who will provide in extremis support should things go awry? Dutch governments regularly have to reassure parliament on these points to gain endorsement for any overseas military missions. End comment.

Sobel